



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

N<sup>o</sup>. XXIX.

*An account of a poisonous plant, growing spontaneously in the southern part of Virginia. Extracted from a paper, by Dr. James Greenway, of Dinwiddie-County, in Virginia.*

Read Feb.  
19, 1790.

**T**O point out an article of the creation, fraught with noxious qualities, dangerous to mankind, and hurtful to animals, is equally as serviceable to the public, as to inform them of the medicinal virtues of the most salutary vegetable, or celebrated antidote.

As the virtues of plants have been generally discovered, by accident; so likewise have deleterious qualities been detected, in others, where no suspicion had ever been entertained of such. The plant, here mentioned, is an instance of this: the deleterious quality, from outward appearance, smell, or taste, of this vegetable, can hardly be suspected unless by a botanist; and even *he* must judge, on the bare conjectural foundation of similar virtues, in plants of the same genus; which is perpetually found to fail, in numerous instances.

I have heard this poisonous herb, called by the names of Wild-Carrot, Wild-Parfnep, Fever-Root, and Mock-Eel-Root. The English names of plants are, in this country, frequently misapplied, and do not distinguish them, with any certainty.

It does not resemble a carrot or parfnep, in the stalks, leaves, or flowers; though the root has some resemblance to a parfnep, in colour and smell; and the seeds have also a great likeness. It resembles the Angelica, and the mis-

chief

chief that has been done by it, has proceeded from mistaking one for the other.

I will here insert the description, as it stands in my catalogue, first, in botanical terms, for such as are lovers of that science, and then in language, as plainly English as the subject will admit, for the sake of those to whom those terms are less familiar.

*Cicuta Venenosa. Classis, Pentandria. Ordo, Digynia.*

Radix perennis, fusiformis, perpendicularis; colore et odore pastinacæ radicis prædita. Caulis erectus, herbaceus, quatuor pedes altus, teres, fistulosus, geniculatus, subnudus, striato-caniculatus, purpureus, superne tomentosus—Folia petiolata, petiolis semi-amplexicaulibus, membranaceis, sulcatis, triternata, bipinnata, cum impari terminatrice, sæpe bilobo; foliolis sessilibus, oblongo-lanceolatis, ferratis.—Folia ima longissimè petiolata, triternata, foliolis ovalibus ferratis, ferraturis denticulatis.

Flores albi, in umbellis compositis subrotundis, sine involucrio universali cum partiali polyphyllo. Locis campestribus et collibus apricis gaudet: mensibus Julii Augustique floret.

*Hemlock, Poisonous Mock-El-Root, &c.*

The root is perennial; of the colour and smell of a parsnep, but much smaller. The stalk rises four feet high, upright, round, lightly channelled, as if fluted; of a purple colour, hairy or downey on the upper part; hollow and jointed. There are only two, three, or four pair of leaves, placed oppositely, at the joints, on membranaceous hollowed stalks, which embrace the main stem. The leaves are winged, terminated with an odd one, which is frequently divided into two lobes.

The folioles are oblong, and spear-shaped, sawed on their edges. The flowers are white, composing a large compound umbel, without any involucre; containing many smaller or partial umbels, each with an involucre of many small narrow leaves. The filaments and styles may be seen projecting beyond the flower leaves, being longer than the petals are. It grows on hilly barren lands, on dry grounds and open fields; though sometimes I have found it in moist places. It blooms in July and August.

I have, lately, observed several of these plants; with their lower leaves growing on very long stems, or petioles, the petiole encreasing in length is divided into three; and each of these subdivided again into three more. Each small stem, of this last division, bears three leaves; which at their first putting out seem to be joined in one: but as they increase, with age, the lobes divide, and expand themselves into three distinct leaves, which are oval shaped, sawed on the edges; with denticles, or small points, at every serrature. Those which do not fully expand, remain in two lobes, or three lobes, whence proceeds the great variety of the leaves, in this plant. The expansion of the petiole varies very much, also in its divisions; from whence it happens, that the leaves are often simply pinnate, ternate, doubly ternate; triply ternate; which may vary the description, but the habit of the plant is so striking, and similar, in every one, that no mistake can possibly happen in distinguishing it.

This plant is endued with a poisonous quality. Its operation, on the human body, has been pointed out by an accident, that happened, very lately, in my neighbourhood; the relation of which is as follows,

Sometime in the month of May last, three negro-boys were searching, in the woods, for Wild Angelica, or, as they commonly call it, Eel-Root. They found a plant, and dug

dug up the root, but upon tasting it, the two elder of the boys perceived it was not the root, they wanted. They, therefore, threw it down and left it. The youngest boy took it up, said it was Eel-Root, and he would eat some of it. They went on searching and digging for some time: at length their young companion was missing; they turned back the way they came, and found him lying on the ground, speechless and senseless. They took him up, to carry him home: a neighbour met them, on the way, to whom the boys related the story, as above. This gentleman upon whose veracity I relate this fact, being a man of reputation and character, and in whose integrity I place the greatest confidence, told me the story, a few days after it happened. He says, he ordered the boy to be laid down, under a tree; poured down some milk and oil, and sent him home to his owner, who lives within a mile. He was utterly deprived of sense; there was no convulsion, or spasm: nor any degree of tension, or stiffness: his limbs were perfectly limber and loose; he appeared to be in a deep sleep, deprived of all motion, except that of respiration. The boys shewed this gentleman the plant, that the diseased one had eaten of. Some of the leaves were shewn to me, which I immediately discovered to be the species of Hemlock, here mentioned. The boy was carried home; and, after a day or two, came to his senses again; but they think he has never perfectly recovered: a small degree of dullness and stupidity still remains on his brain.

The Cicuta, or Hemlock of the ancients, used for putting malefactors to death, particularly at Athens, is unknown to us at this day. The celebrated Dr. Mead, in his Essay on Poisons, thinks it was not a simple, but a compound of anodyne juices, with others of a corrosive nature.

Throphrastus

## 238 REMARKS ON THE CICUTA VENENOSA.

Throphraftus says that Thraſyas, a great phyſician, had invented a compoſition, which would cauſe death, without any pain; and that this was prepared with the juice of Hemlock, and Poppy together; and did the buſineſs, in a ſmall doſe. Plato relates the noble death of his maſter Socrates, ſo as to evince it was brought on by a compound of this nature; viz. the ſymptoms were eyes fixt, heavineſs and inſenſibility of the legs, great coldneſs, which, by degrees, ſeized the vital parts.

The famous poiſon, kept by the public of Marſeilles had Hemlock, or Cicuta, as an ingredient in it; a doſe of which, was allowed by the magiſtrates, to any one, who could ſhow a reaſon why he ſhould deſire death.

The Cicuta, or Hemlock, here mentioned, and of which, this boy had eaten but a very ſmall quantity of the root, ſeems to be of ſufficient ſtrength, without any addition. We are told that, vegetable poiſons, ſuch as Hemlock and Monkſhood, occaſion convulſions, and bring on a painful death; and that, this deadly quality conſiſts in juices of a corroſive nature, affecting the ſtomack and firſt paſſages with a violent pain and inflammation: that this active, acrimonious, ſtimulating, or corroſive property was corrected in the celebrated poiſons above mentioned, by the admixture of anodynes and narcoticks, that ſhould weaken the vellicating, and painful part of their operation, and blunt the ſenſibility of the nervous ſyſtem ſo as to render their effects inſenſible until they brought on an eaſy death.

The plant, here deſcribed, ſeems to be poſſeſſed of all the powers above mentioned. A very ſmall quantity of the root was eaten: It operated upon the nervous ſyſtem, ſo as to deprive the boy of all ſenſe and motion, except reſpiration; and had he taken a larger doſe, death would

have

have been the consequence. This is a plain indication of its narcotick quality, and stupefactive powers.

---

N<sup>o</sup>. XXX.

*Description of a Machine for measuring a ship's way: in a letter from FRANCIS HOPKINSON, ESQ. to Mr. JOHN VAUGHAN.*

Read Dec.  
17, 1790.

**I**N the 2d. volume of our Philosophical Transactions, I published a description of an instrument for measuring a ship's way through the sea. I have not heard of any objection to the principles on which such a machine may be constructed, but it may, probably, have been thought too complex for general use.

As this object, should it be accomplished, would be of great importance, I have made another attempt to the same purpose; in which, if there should be no other objection, the want of simplicity cannot reasonably be complained of.

Close along the ship's bow is a copper pipe, about two inches in diameter, extending downward as low as the keel, and upward above the water line when the vessel is loaded. This pipe must be so bent at the bottom as that its orifice may be directly opposed to the line of the ship's progress, and project but a little way beyond the keel or cut-water. The upper part of this pipe must also be so bent as that it may enter into the fore-castle, through a hole made for the purpose, above the water line. The pipe should be secured in its place by staples or clamps.

On the top of this copper pipe should be a cover to be screwed on, and through the cover a hole must be made  
for